Talks between India and China on border dispute

*48. SHRI N.R. DASARI:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether official talks between India and China were held recently to solve the boundary dispute between the two countries; and

(b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Special Representatives of the Governments of India and China on the Boundary Question held their first meeting in New Delhi on October 23-24, 2003. The meeting was held in a codial, constructive and cooperative atmosphere. On October 24, 2003, the Chinese Special Representatives called on Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister. The Special Representatives, who have been tasked by the Prime Ministers of India and China to explore from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship the framework of a boundary settlement, have agreed to meet again on mutually acceptable dates in Beijing.

Bangladesh Government's objection over interlinking of rivers by India

*49. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY:
SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Bangladesh has expressed objection and resentment against the interlinking of rivers proposed to be initiated by India;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the grounds on which the objections are based; and

(c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to allay the misapprehensions of the Government of Bangladesh in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) The Government of Bangladesh has protested the proposed implementation of the river inter-

linking project contending that any transfer of water from the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and their tributaries would cause irreparable and permanent damage to Bangladesh. Further, that massive intervention with the natural regime of the major international river system would remove the assured basis of development planning in the water and related sectors in Bangladesh and would create serious uncertainty. In the view of Bangladesh, the proposed project would contravene the recognized principles of international law and the letter and spirit of existing agreements between Bangladesh and India.

2. The Task Force on Inter-linking of rivers as constituted by Government of India in December, 2002 is required to consider the international dimensions that are involved in the project and also to prepare guidelines for formulation of detailed project reports of inter-linking proposals. The Government will take further action after the recommendations of the Task Force are received and while implementing the project the existing international treaties and laws relating to sharing of water of international rivers would be taken into consideration. The Project is only at a preliminary stage.

Irrigation schemes under North East Council (NEC)

*50. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of irrigation schemes included by NEC works planned for Tripura;

(b) the details of the irrigation schemes to be undertaken by NEC in other States; and

(c) if there is no scheme for irrigation in the North-Eastern States under NEC, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Nil.

(b) and (c) NEC takes up regional schemes which are beneficial to more than one State. 2 Projects, *viz.* Regional Jiri Irrigation Project in Manipur and Dzuza Irrigation Project in Nagaland, are proposed to be taken up during the Tenth Plan.